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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [OAS](#) [XL](#) [GY](#)  
SUBJECT: OAS OBSERVERS FOR GUYANA, CONCERN OVER ELECTION  
DELAY

REF: A. GEORGETOWN 308

[1](#)B. GEORGETOWN 181  
[1](#)C. GEORGETOWN 167

Classified By: Ambassador Roland W. Bullen  
For reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY. OAS A/SYG Ramdin led a three-person OAS mission to Guyana April 6-11 that paves the way for an OAS Electoral Observation Mission (EOM) with a broader role of ensuring that Guyana has elections. His visit coincided with the Guyana Elections Commission's (GECOM) capitulation that it cannot deliver elections by the August 4 constitutional due date, primarily the result of the political impasse between the ruling and opposition party Commissioners. Ramdin wants to address this impasse by facilitating the high-level political dialogue lacking in Guyana. The long-term component of OAS' EOM should begin by end of April. Ramdin is eager to get this technical mission started, but insufficient funding commitments are still a sticking point. END SUMMARY.

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Ramdin Makes the Rounds  
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[1](#)2. (U) OAS A/SYG Albert Ramdin visited Guyana April 8-11, preceded by Steve Griner of the Promotion of Democracy Department and advisor Sherry Tross. Ramdin met privately with Ambassador and twice more with donors to hear their perspective and share his view on OAS' strategy for Guyana. Ramdin also met with several stakeholders, including President Jagdeo, GECOM Chairman Dr. Steve Surujbally, and political parties - with the notable exception of the main opposition PNC/R, whose leader was out of the country and whose deputies could not find a mutually convenient time to meet.

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No Elections by August 4  
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[1](#)3. (U) Surujbally told Ramdin during their meeting that GECOM could no longer meet the August 4 constitutional deadline for elections. Ramdin referred to this inevitable delay in his April 10 conference. This was the first official

pronouncement, albeit indirect, that GECOM could not hold elections within the constitutional timeframe - thus saving Surujbally and GECOM the blushes of having to break the news to the public themselves. (Note: The disarray in which this leaves the election process to be reported septel.)

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"Problems are political, not technical"  
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¶4. (SBU) Ramdin left Guyana more convinced than ever, as is post and other donors, that the obstacles to Guyana's electoral process are political rather than technical. As such, OAS will continue to press for elections as soon as possible. Ramdin's prescription to break the deadlock is for the political parties to reengage in meaningful dialogue. Ramdin proposed privately the establishment of an "inter-political party forum" to foster this dialogue, emphasizing, however, that OAS' role is just to "facilitate" and not to "mediate".

¶5. (C) Unfortunately, this "forum" idea is a watered down version of the "political pact" concept that Ramdin had initially floated during his February visit (ref C), and which post felt was a long shot but at least the best chance of convincing the PNC/R to stop stonewalling elections. Ramdin felt it was too ambitious to expect the parties to come together right off the bat and agree to a political pact on reforms - instead, he now favors a staged approach of dialogue on the electoral process followed by an agreement on post-election reforms.

¶6. (C) Of further concern, the PPP/C party leaders rejected the idea of initiating this dialogue when meeting Ramdin, who feels the PPP/C is not concerned with the current political

situation and in fact sees engagement as a sign of vulnerability. Ramdin reported that he pointedly told Jagdeo how troublesome is his party's apparent indifference to political dialogue, especially given the GoG's heavy dependence on foreign aid. Jagdeo responded that he had invited opposition leader Robert Corbin to meet on election issues and expected to do so within two weeks (not fast enough, donors believe). Donors agreed to take on the task of encouraging the parties, particularly the PPP/C, to pursue political dialogue.

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OAS Long-term Observers on the Way  
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¶7. (U) Ramdin said that a two-person, long-term observation team is slated to arrive in Guyana by month end. Steve Griner - who observed the 1992 Guyanese elections with the Carter Center - is likely to lead this team.

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Stumping for Greater CARICOM Involvement  
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¶8. (C) Since his last visit (ref C), Ramdin met with St. Lucia PM Kenny Anthony, as current chair of CARICOM's Justice and Governance portfolio, and Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) FonMin Knowlson Gift, as T&T is current CARICOM Heads of Government chair, to confer on Guyanese elections. PM Anthony may visit Guyana in early May and FonMin Gift in late April, ostensibly for bilateral reasons or to visit CARICOM's new headquarters, but actually to assess the political situation on the ground.

¶9. (C) Ramdin remains adamant about greater CARICOM involvement in a Guyana electoral mission, but CARICOM simply is not ready yet. He is still eager to identify a high-level individual from the region who can collaborate with OAS in Guyana. Outgoing Jamaica Prime Minister PJ Patterson had been mentioned for this role, but that looks unlikely after both Anthony and Gift reacted lukewarmly to this suggestion.

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Ramdin, Insulza Want Company on Future Visits  
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¶10. (U) Ramdin said that he and OAS SYG Insulza intend to maintain momentum in Guyana through visits "several times over the next few months". Ramdin expressed his desire to have high-level companions on future visits to demonstrate OAS as an institution. Ramdin specifically mentioned Ambassador Maisto and DAS Duddy, as well Tim Dunn, his Canadian counterpart, and Brazil's representative.

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OAS Still Has Cap in Hand  
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¶11. (U) Throughout his visit, Ramdin stressed the need for further monetary and in-kind contributions so that OAS can embark on this critical EOM without the risk of having to pull the plug before its completion. Ambassador suggested to Ramdin that OAS also approach T&T for funding, as they can afford to assist and also have a vested interest in Guyana's stability.

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OAS' Next Steps  
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¶12. (U) Besides reporting to the OAS Permanent Council April 12, Ramdin intends to issue a statement stressing the need for dialogue between Guyana's political parties and to arrange high-level calls from SYG Insulza, and hopefully others, to Jagdeo and Corbin reinforcing the same message. On the other hand, Ramdin is wary of putting too much pressure on the political leaders - his preference is for OAS' EOM to take a "balanced, technical approach".

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Comment  
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¶13. (U) Post remains enthusiastic about Ramdin's understanding of Guyana's political landscape and his strong commitment to taking preemptive measures before unrest escalates. Post and other donors will warmly welcome the imminent EOM. OAS' plan compares very favorably to that of the Commonwealth Secretariat, which went radio silent for months after promising greater involvement. However, OAS' plan does not convincingly chart a course to solve the political calculus now facing Guyana - the PNC/R must receive some tangible concession in exchange for backing down from its intransigent demand for full house-to-house verification of the voters list (refs A and B). End comment.  
BULLEN